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*The Principles of* POPERY  
*Schismatical.*

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693.e.2.  
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SERMON

PREACHED AT

SALTERS-HALL,

APRIL 3, 1735.

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By MOSES LOWMAN.

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L O N D O N :

Printed for J. NOON at the *White-Hart* near  
*Mercers-Chapel*, in *Cheapside*; R. FORD at the  
*Angel*, R. HETT at the *Bible and Crown*, and  
J. GRAY at the *Cross-Keys*; all in the *Poultry*.

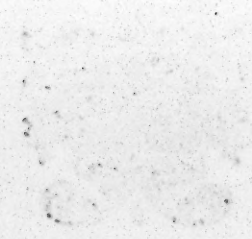
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R O M. xi. 22.

*Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell severity, but towards thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness, otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.*

**S**T. Paul writing to the church of Rome, usefully warns it against the danger of schism; lest it should be cut off from the unity and communion of the true church.

He inforces this warning by considerations, equally reasonable, and persuasive. He sets before them, the then present state of the Jewish church, God's antient people, who were cut off from the privileges of God's church, by their unbelief. He mentions  
their

their own happiness, who from among the Heathen, and idolatrous nations, were received into God's church, and had obtain'd thereby an interest in all the blessings of God's peculiar people. These were instances both of goodness and severity, which deserv'd an attentive observation, a careful and wise improvement. Did God reject the *Jews*, and cast off his own people, which had been his *only church*, and so highly favour'd by him for so long a time? Did God give such an instance of severe justice? Other churches ought wisely to consider, why this church was cut off, and how they themselves stand; they ought to observe the apostle's reasoning: *Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith; be not high minded, but fear.\** They ought to learn this wisdom, that they carefully watch against a proud conceit of themselves, and an uncharitable contempt of others, apprehensive, they may lose the privileges of the true church, as the *Jews* had done before them, if they shall fall into a like state of apostacy. If God cast off his antient people for *their* unbelief, the *Roman* church, to which the apostle writes, had just reason to fear, if it should apostatize from the Christian faith, if it should renounce obedience to Christ

Jesus

\* Ver. 20.

Jesus the Lord, and to his gospel, the rule of his religion, *it* also should be cut off.

Before I proceed to a particular consideration of the subject I am to discourse upon, it will be proper to make some more general remarks on the text itself.

*First*, We may observe, the apostle represents the Jewish church *cut off* from the *unity and communion* of God's *true church*, while it yet continued *a visible church in all acts of external communion*. This church, which the apostle represents, an example of justice out off from the privileges of the true church, was yet a church which had many things to glory in. It had an *antiquity* of two thousand years, *a succession of priesthood* from *Aaron*, to whose family the priesthood was by God's express appointment confin'd. It had been long favoured by God, above all nations of the earth; theirs were *the prophets and the fathers*, and to them were *committed the oracles of God*. They used then the same external forms of worship and communion, which they used, when Christ himself was a member of their church, and in communion with it; and yet the apostle calls upon the church of *Rome*, to behold this very church an example



example of God's severity, cut off from the communion and privileges of the true church, by unbelief, because she followed the tradition of her doctors, and their false interpretations of the scripture; and having falsified the true meaning of the prophecies, rejected the promised Messiah, when he came, she was cut off, for that unbelief.

2. We are to observe, this warning is directed in particular to the *church of Rome*, intimating, *that church* was not free from the danger of schism, or being cut off from the privileges of the true church, as the Jewish church now was. One would think the apostle had foreseen how the church of *Rome* would wrest the scriptures in after-times, to support her pretence to the prerogative of an unerring, infallible, and indefectible church, and had therefore wisely put in this caution against it before-hand. Here the church of *Rome*, in its best and purest state, is directed to behold the severity of God, towards the Jewish church, as a warning to take heed, lest by a like apostacy from the faith and obedience of the true church, she her self should also be cut off. Does the apostle here suppose the church of *Rome* could never fail? That it

could

could never be in danger of losing the privileges of the true church? Does the apostle suppose the church of *Rome* must necessarily be “ever pure, and holy in her doctrines, and terms of communion?” And therefore always free from any “pernicious errors?” When on the contrary the apostle supposes, that the church of *Rome* has no such prerogative above other churches; that she ought not to depend on any such groundless and false hopes; that she stands in need of this warning as much as any other church: if she shall disregard it, and not continue in the faith, and obedience of the gospel, she will not continue in the goodness of God, and the church of *Rome* itself shall also be cut off.

3. We are here also to observe, the great danger of schism, as it cuts off from the communion and privileges of the true church. The apostle’s solemn and awful warning to the church of *Rome*, does evidently mean this. Schism, real schism, which cuts off from the communion of the true church, must deprive men of the hopes, privileges and blessings, which the true church of God enjoys, in God’s peculiar favour and grace, according to his promises

B

and

and covenant : While we continue in the communion of the true church of God, we continue in the goodness of God, in his peculiar favour : but when we are cut off from the communion of the true church, we must fall from that state of favour, which God has promised to his church, as a people peculiarly consecrated to his service, and entitled to peculiar marks of his protection and grace.

The subject then I am to discourse upon, from these words, is of great importance in itself ; as it nearly concerns all Christians to know when they continue in the goodness of God, and when they are cut off from the communion of the true church, and lose their right to the privileges and blessings of it.

It is farther of importance, as it makes a considerable part of the controversy between the church of *Rome* and Protestants ; a subject which the Papists have managed with art and subtilty ; so as often to impose upon the injudicious, and terrify the weak, and sometimes to prevail upon persons of better understanding and judgment. The great *Chillingworth* owns, \*  
 “ He had been sometimes himself abused  
 “ by this fallacy, and known many other

\* L. 5. §. 27.



“ poor souls seduced, not only from their  
 “ own church and religion, but to Popery  
 “ by it.”

The question then it is my province to consider is this, Whether the separation of Protestants from the external communion of the church of *Rome* be just and necessary ; and whether therefore all the guilt of schism and evil effects of it are not justly chargeable on those principles of the *Roman* church, which made the separation of Protestants from the *Roman* communion necessary for their own reformation.

I shall endeavour to give you such a view of this argument, as I hope will be intelligible and convincing, and upon such principles as are generally receiv'd and owned by all Protestants.

I. I shall briefly state the true nature of schism, which may also serve to shew the guilt and danger of it.

II. I shall shew, what reason Protestants have to charge the principles of the church of *Rome* as schismatical.

III. I shall shew the weakness and fallacy of those arguments, by which the church of *Rome* attempts to vindicate her self from this charge of schism, and to charge the Protestant reformation with it.

I. I am briefly to shew the true nature of schism, which may also serve to shew the guilt and danger of it.

Schism in general means some contention, division, or disunion in bodies which ought to be united. Schism in religious matters is pretty much the same as sedition and rebellion are in civil matters; so that schism, says a memorable author,\* “is an ecclesiastical sedition, as sedition is a lay schism.”

The Christian church is properly represented as *one body*, or a society, incorporate by the charter of the gospel, under Jesus Christ as supreme head and governor: And as all true Christians are made members of this one body, they must also be members one of another. The unity of the Christian church will then come under a

\* *Hales's Tracts* 194.

double notion : the unity of this religious society with Christ as the head of it ; and the unity of the several members of it with each other, as members of the same incorporate society.

1. Then, one principal unity of the Christian church, is the union of all Christians with Christ as supreme head and governor. All Christians become one body, by *one spirit*, as they receive *one Lord*, profess *one faith*, are consecrated by *one baptism*, to the service and worship of the *one God* and father of all, as they are called in *one hope* of their calling.\* When then we sincerely believe in Christ Jesus the Lord and receive him as God's Anointed, whom he has sanctified to save us from our sins, and whom he has invested with supreme power and authority, as head over all things to the church ; when we profess this faith in sincerity, when we aim with an upright heart, to make good this profession in all things by obedience to the directions, orders, and rules of Christ's gospel ; we then *believe with the heart unto righteousness, and make confession with the mouth unto salvation.*†

\* Ephes. iv, 4. &c.

† Rom. x. 10.

Then



Then we are, according to the gospel of Christ, which is the charter of his church, received into it, and have a right by it, to all the privileges, blessings, and grace promis'd to God's peculiar and favour'd people. This is the unity and communion of the *true Catholick* church, which is not improperly call'd the internal communion of the invisible church.

But if we continue not in this faith, and obedience of the gospel of Christ; if we refuse *to walk in Christ Jesus the Lord, as we have received him*; \* if we virtually renounce our allegiance to him, as our supreme head and governor; we thereby separate ourselves from *this unity* of his body, and are separated from this internal communion of the invisible church: We continue not in the goodness of God, and in his favour, but forfeit all right to the blessings which the charter of Christ's gospel has made the peculiar privileges of his church. This is a behaviour truly schismatical, and so contrary to all the obligations and duty of a Christian, expresses so high disobedience to Christ and his gospel, that it must be esteem'd a sin of most dangerous consequence.

2. We

\* Coloss. v. 6.

2. We are further to observe, there is another unity of the Christian church, whereby the members of it are united to each other. Love and charity are essential precepts of true religion; Christ has made the love of Christians to each other the distinguishing character of his disciples; this is that *bond of perfectness*, by which the several members of the Christian church are most perfectly united to each other.

An *unity of opinion* in all points, an *uniform practice* in all things, an *union of government* under one universal head of the church, as vicar of Christ upon earth, cannot be necessary to the union of all Christians among themselves. The wisdom of God never made that *necessary*, which the nature of things, and constant experience of the world, shew to be *impracticable*. That all Christians then should agree in points uncertain and doubtful, or be united in submission to an authority without all reason, and against many evident and important reasons, can never be the bond of Catholick communion, can never be that *perfect bond of unity* which is able to unite *all true Christians* among themselves.

But

But *all Christians* may be united in affection and brotherly love: these are duties certainly required of every Christian; these are proper means by which the peace, the honour, the perfection of the Christian church, as a religious society, will be greatly promoted. It must be then a very great Christian duty, an important part of obedience to the Christian faith, to keep this *unity of the spirit in the bond of peace*. All therefore, who from pride and ambition, from covetousness and private interest, from envy or revenge, from angry passion or unfociable temper, shall be the uncharitable cause of contentions and divisions in the Christian church, and bring upon it all the disorder and evils that seldom fail to follow such uncharitable divisions, must be guilty of a very grievous sin: a sin so dangerous to the peace, honour, and perfection of the church, we may well fear threatens a loss of the privileges of the true church. There is great reason to fear that Christ, the true head of the church, will treat them as *aliens and strangers to the covenant of promise*, who will not *walk in love as fellow-citizens with the saints*. Uncharitable contentions and divisions seem to have run their full length. When Christians shall refuse to join with each other



in worshipping the one God and Father of them all, or in the service of the one Lord, their common Saviour and head; when *they* shall excommunicate and anathematize each other; when Christians shall come to so high a degree of uncharitableness as to *hate* their fellow Christians more heartily than they *love* their God and Saviour, than they regard the peace, the honour, or the happiness of their church; then sure they are justly chargeable with the guilt of schism. They have reason to fear all the evils that follow upon it, the righteous punishment of so great, so grievous a sin. I proceed,

II. To shew *what* reasons Protestants have to charge the principles of Popery as schismatical, so that the great danger of schism will be found in the communion of the *Roman* church, and not in the communion of the Reformed churches. It is a plain and sure truth, \* “ The schism is  
 “ theirs, whose the cause of it is; and he  
 “ makes the separation, that gave the first  
 “ just cause of it; not he that makes an  
 “ actual separation, upon a just cause first  
 “ given.” Or, † “ a culpable breach of  
 C “ the

\* Archbishop *Laud* against *Fisher*, S. 21. N. 6. p. 92.

† *Dodwell* on Schism, p. 568.

“ the church’s unity is, what is properly meant by the true nature of schism.”

The question then, whether the principles of Popery are schismatical may be brought to this plain issue: Whether the church of *Rome* imposing the profession and practice of great errors and corruptions on persons, who could not profess and practise them without danger of cutting themselves off from the communion of the true church with Christ the head, and without damnable sin, and yet uncharitably excommunicating and cutting off from her communion all who refuse to comply with her corruptions, is not the real cause of a very grievous schism in the church of Christ? To make good this charge I would observe,

I. The church of *Rome* requires the profession and practice of great errors, and dangerous corruptions. It is not my province to consider these errors and corruptions in particular; several able hands have considered them already, and proved them on the church of *Rome* with full evidence, and I hope to your full satisfaction. It will be sufficient for our present purpose to observe, that the Popish doctrine of infallibility has taken away the very foundation

of *Christian faith*, together with all authority of the word of God, which only can be the foundation of a *divine* faith; and really leaves no foundation for the faith of the Christian church, but the authority of fallible men. The church of *Rome*, by taking away the use of the scriptures from the common people, hath taken away the key of knowledge; and by directing the use of an unknown tongue in their prayers, will not permit men to worship God with understanding. By the doctrines of absolution and purgatory, the *Roman* church teaches men a way, how they may hope for the salvation of God at the last, though they live in sin, nay even though they die in their sins. The doctrines of this church ascribe such power and authority to the Pope, as leave no power, no authority to Christ himself: in virtue of this usurped authority, the church of *Rome* adds her own constitutions to the institutions of Christ, and makes them of as binding obligation as his; assumes a power to set aside and over-rule them, and even to make decrees in direct contradiction to Christ's own express constitutions. They have thus taken away one half of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, with an express *notwithstanding* to the allowed institution



tution of the cup ; they have chang'd the other half from one of the plainest rites in the world, into a doctrine full of all manner of absurdity and contradiction ; as if they thought themselves at full liberty to deprive men of reason and of common sense, as well as of faith. Besides the infinite superstitions they have introduced in room of the most reasonable service, they have brought their whole worship, on many accounts, into great danger of plain idolatry, in the worship of angels and saints, of bread, and the relicks of dead men, and even of images, against which there is so full and express a prohibition in the law of God.

2. It is further to be observ'd, the *Roman* church has made all these errors and corruptions *necessary terms of her communion*. She has bound them on the faith and practice of every one of her members, by her full authority, and by the solemn decisions of her general councils. These errors and corruptions are incorporated into the most solemn acts of worship, and the members of the *Roman* church are obliged to *approve* them as well as to *use* them. There is a remarkable decree of the council of *Trent* to this purpose, with respect to all the cor-  
ruptions

ruptions of their pretended seven sacraments: " If any one shall say that Christ  
 " did not institute all the sacraments of the  
 " new law, or that they are more or less  
 " than seven, or that any one of the seven is not truly and properly a sacrament, let him be anathema." \* So they require " a full approbation of all the received and approved rites the church is accustomed to use in the solemn administration of them." † Thus the *Roman* church has taken effectual care, that every one must have communion with her in her errors and corruptions, or have no communion with her at all. Pope *Boniface VIII.* expressly declared, accordingly, " that

\* Si quis dixerit sacramenta novæ legis non fuisse omnia à Jesu Christo domino nostro instituta, aut esse plura vel pauciora quam septem, videlicet, Baptismum, Confirmationem, Eucharistiam, Penitentiam, Extremam Unctionem, Ordinem, & Matrimonium, aut etiam aliquod horum septem non esse verè & propriè sacramentum, anathema sit. *Concil. Trident. S. 7. 3 Martii, 1547. Can. 1.*

† Si quis dixerit receptos & approbatos & ecclesiæ Catholicæ ritus in solemnibus sacramentorum administratione adhiberi consuetos, aut contemni, aut sine peccato à ministris pro libito omitti, aut in novos alios per quemcunque ecclesiarum pastorem mutari posse, anathema sit. *Ib. Can. 13.*

" obedience

“ obedience to the bishop of *Rome* was  
 “ absolutely necessary to salvation.” ‡

3. It is yet further to be observed, the *Roman* church imposes these corruptions with a most *uncharitable rigor*: she excommunicates and anathematizes, and persecutes to ruin and destruction with a merciless cruelty, all who refuse a full and entire submission to them. The creed of Pope *Pius IV*, now in use for receiving of converts into the *Roman* church, requires, after a profession of the several doctrines *that* church teaches in particular, this further general profession: “ I likewise undoubtedly receive and profess all  
 “ other things delivered, defined, and declared by the sacred canons and general  
 “ councils, and particularly by the holy  
 “ council of *Trent*; and I condemn, reject, and anathematize all things contrary thereto, and all heresies which the  
 “ church has condemned, rejected, and  
 “ anathematized. I do, at this present,  
 “ freely profess, and sincerely hold this

‡ Porro subesse Romano pontifici, omni humanæ creaturæ (or omnem humanam creaturam, as others read it) declaramus, dicimus, definimus, & pronunciamus, omnino esse de necessitate salutis. *Bonifacius oct. Extravag. Com. Tit. viii. c. 1. de majoritate & obedientia.*



“ true Catholick faith, without which no  
 “ one can be saved.”

So uncharitable are the principles of Popery; they pass a sentence of excommunication and damnation against all who will not submit to their dangerous corruptions; and the *Roman* church requires all the members of her communion, to receive those uncharitable principles as a *part of their religion*, and to join with them in their curses and anathema's, as well as in their errors.

4. The *Roman* church most uncharitably imposes the profession and practice of their errors and corruptions on persons, who cannot profess and practice them, without manifest danger of cutting themselves off from the communion of the true church with Christ the head, and *without damnable sin*. Had their errors and corruptions been of much less evil and dangerous consequence than they really are; yet persons who knew them to be errors, who were fully convinced in conscience they were corruptions, could not profess to believe them, could not practise them without plain hypocrisy and evident falshood, which are inconsistent with the faith and obedience of the gospel of Christ, and are in themselves  
 damnable

damnable sins. For, as one well observes,\*  
 “ God, the eternal truth, neither can nor  
 “ will oblige us to believe any the least or  
 “ most innocent falshood, to be a divine  
 “ truth, that is, to err; nor to profess a  
 “ known error which is, to lie: so that if  
 “ you require the belief of *any* error among  
 “ the *conditions* of your communion, our  
 “ *obligation* to communicate with you ceas-  
 “ eth, and so the imputation of schism to  
 “ us vanisheth into nothing, but lies heavy  
 “ upon *you* for making our separation from  
 “ you just and necessary, by requiring *un-*  
 “ *necessary* and *unlawful* conditions of your  
 “ communion.” Not therefore to forsake  
 the errors of the *Roman* church, believing  
 them to be errors, or “ not to forsake the  
 “ practice and profession of them, says  
 “ the same great author, had been dam-  
 “ nable hypocrisy, supposing (which you  
 “ vainly run away with and take for gran-  
 “ ted,) that those errors in themselves were  
 “ not damnable.”†

This plain reason made it necessary for  
 all persons, who were sensible of the errors  
 and corruptions of Popery, to separate from  
 the external communion of the *Roman*  
 church, because they could not possibly con-

\* *Chillingworth's* answer to the preface, §. 22,

† *Id.* *Ibid.*

tinue in it without falshood and dishonesty, lying and hypocrisy, which to be sure are *damnable sins* in themselves. But a proof so plain and decisive as this must not pass without some distinction or exception, that may some way darken or perplex it. It is therefore said, though possibly this plea may justify a *negative* separation or non-communion with the church of *Rome*, in things which we cannot profess and practise without hypocrisy, yet it will not justify a *positive* separation, or joining with other separate communions, and setting up altar against altar. A little attention may serve I think to shew the insufficiency and weakness of this exception.

For first, this exception seems to allow, what the principles of the *Roman* communion will not really allow upon any terms. Popery condemns negative separation, or non-communion upon every pretence, as much as positive separation, or joining with separate communions ; for as the great *Chillingworth* observes, “ the condition of your communion is, that we  
 “ must profess to believe all your doctrines,  
 “ not only *not to be damnable errors*,  
 “ (which will not content you) but also  
 “ to be *certain and necessary and revealed*  
 “ *truths* :---to pretend that there are errors  
 “ in your church, tho’ not damnable, is *ipso*  
 D “ *facto*



“ *facto* to forsake your communion, and  
 “ to do that which both in your account,  
 “ and as you think in God’s account, puts  
 “ him that does so out of your commu-  
 “ nion :” \* so that this proof remains firm  
 against the *real principles* of the church of  
*Rome*, any thing in this exception to the  
 contrary notwithstanding.

Besides, the worship of God is a first and  
 principal duty of the law of nature and of  
 all religion : to worship God according to  
 the directions of the Christian revelation,  
 is a chief duty of Christianity. Is it pos-  
 sible then a doctrine so uncertain and doubt-  
 ful, so erroneous and false, as the Pope’s  
 supreme authority over the whole Christian  
 church, should null and make void the chief  
 and most sacred obligations of the Christian  
 revelation, and the eternal laws of natural  
 religion ? Is it possible any authority can  
 proceed from *God*, and *Christ*, which shall  
 lay an obligation on *Christians*, not to wor-  
 ship God according to the Christian reve-  
 lation, in any other way than such, in  
 which they cannot worship God without  
 damnable sin : this is in effect to lay an  
 obligation on Christians not to worship  
 God at all.

Finally, this exception, instead of mend-  
 ing the matter, really makes it worse. If  
 this doctrine could be true, that Christians

\* *Chillingworth’s* answer to the preface, §. 81.

were not to join in any separate communion from the church of *Rome* to worship God, tho' they cannot have communion with the church of *Rome*, without damnable sin; this would put them under a necessity of sinning either way; *either* by worshipping God in the church of *Rome*, or by not worshipping God as Christians at all. This shews the principles of the church of *Rome* most highly schismatical and uncharitable.

They lay men of conscience and honesty, if they are to follow this doctrine, under an hard necessity of sinning which way soever they act. They neither permit men of conscience to have communion with their church, nor suffer them to have communion with any other part of the Christian church throughout the whole world: this appears in the highest sense a culpable breach of the church's unity, which is the true notion of schism.

If then the *guilt* of schism is chargeable upon those who are the *cause* of it; Papists have taken great care to make the decision of this question between us and them evident and plain, by the numerous and important errors and corruptions of their communion, by the obstinate, rigorous and uncharitable spirit with which they impose them.

5. We are farther to observe, there is one great error of Popery, a principal founda-

tion of its other corruptions, which is directly schismatical in the most dangerous sense, as it breaks the unity and communion of the church with Christ the true head of it. Many particular corruptions of the *Roman* church are very important, such as greatly affect the faith, the worship, and the practice of Christianity and true religion in many of the chief and more necessary points. But this great error I am speaking of, this fundamental corruption, as I may call it, of the *Roman* church, is virtually *denying Christ Jesus the head, and renouncing allegiance to him*: that power and authority which the Pope claims as Christ's pretended vicar is subversive of all Christ's own authority, as lawgiver and head of his church. For the Pope claims and exercises a power to make what new laws he pleases, to give an authoritative interpretation of all scripture, and so decisively fix the meaning of every law of Christ, and thereby to make it mean whatsoever he will, and on occasion to alter and change the laws of Christ as he shall see fit, even with a \* *non*

*obstante*

\* Licet Christus post cœnam instituerit & suis discipulis administraverit, sub utraque specie panis & vini hoc venerabile sacramentum, tamen *hoc non obstante* sacrorum canonum autoritas & approbata consuetudo ecclesiæ servavit & servat, quod hujusmodi sacramentum non conficiatur post cœnam, nec sumatur à non jejunis---quod à conficientibus sub utraque specie, & à laicis tantummodo sub specie panis suscipiatur.---Item præcipimus sub pœna excommunicationis quod nullus presbyter communicet populum sub utraque specie panis & vini. *Concil. Constant. §. 12.*



*obstante* to Christ's own allow'd institutions. This is a claim of power to set aside the *one Lord*, as well as to change the *one faith* of the Christian church. In Christ's kingdom it is an *overt-act of rebellion*, it is not only *contriving* and *attempting* to *depose* Christ Jesus from his sovereign authority ; but as far as this power of Popery can reach, it does *actually depose* him and *renounce allegiance* to him. Is there not all reason to fear, that they who withdraw themselves from the *allegiance* due to their only sovereign Lord, do thereby put themselves out of *his protection*, and cut themselves off from all the privileges and blessings which belong to faithful subjects. What then can the external communion of any church avail men, when by not *holding the one head, Christ Jesus the Lord*, they have separated themselves from the internal communion of the church with him, through whom all the goodness and the grace of God are communicated to it. Let then schism be as grievous a sin as words can represent, and of as dangerous consequence as Papists teach, when they would frighten Protestants with the apprehensions of it ; let it be \* “ an offence  
 “ so grievous, that nothing does so much  
 “ incense God----that no reformation can  
 “ be so important as the sin of schism is  
 “ perni-

\* *Knott in Chillingworth, c. 5. §. 7. and 56.*

“ pernicious.---that no multitude of good  
 “ works, no moral honesty of life, no cruel  
 “ death, endured even for the profession of  
 “ some article of faith, can excuse any  
 “ one who is guilty of that sin from dam-  
 “ nation.” Yet all this guilt and danger  
 is only chargeable, where the profession  
 and practice of known errors and corrup-  
 tions, that is, where falshood and hypocrisy,  
 damnable sins, are imposed as necessary  
 terms of Christian communion ; not where  
 this gives a just and necessary cause of sepa-  
 ration.

The greatest danger of all in schism,  
 is to be cut off from the unity of the catholick  
 church, by not *holding the head*, in departing  
 from the faith and obedience of the gospel.  
 It is very far from certain, that to sepa-  
 rate from the external communion of the  
*Roman* church is to separate from Christ's  
 vicar : it is more certain that Christ has no  
 vicar upon earth, at least, that no *vicar of*  
*Christ* can have *those powers*, which the  
 Popes claim and exercise : but this is still  
 more certain, that to communicate with  
 the church of *Rome*, in her corruptions,  
 knowing them to be so, is to separate our-  
 selves from *Christ himself*, the real head of  
 the church, by departing from the faith  
 and obedience of his gospel,

I proceed in the

III<sup>d</sup>. Place to shew the weakness and  
 fallacy of those arguments by which the  
 church

church of *Rome* endeavours to vindicate herself from the charge of schism, and to prove the guilt of schism on the Protestant Reformation.

\* “ Jesus Christ, they tell us, has always a true church upon earth---which true church of Christ is one---always holy in her doctrines and terms of communion, and always free from pernicious errors---that Catholicks, and not Protestants, are this true church of Christ. For the true church of Christ, they say, can be no other than the Catholick, which alone has always had a visible being in the world ever since Christ’s time; not the Protestant, or any other modern sect, which only came into the world since the year 1500; for those that came into the world fifteen hundred years after Christ, came into the world fifteen hundred years too late to be the religion or church of Christ.” Thus they represent their cause in the *Grounds of Catholick doctrine*, lately publish’d for the use of converts. It may not be amiss here to make one general observation, that our charge of schismatical principles on the *Roman* church, has a plain and easy proof founded on evident facts, which the *Roman* church itself has taken care to confirm by her own solemn decrees and anathemas in

\* *Grounds of Catholick Doctrine*, c. 1.



in the council of *Trent* ; and the *Roman* church seems to admit, if we can prove such imposition of error and corruption as we charge the church of *Rome* with, it will justify the charge of *schism* ; because they place their defence in denying *all* error and corruption in their doctrine and terms of communion. Whereas the vindication of the church of *Rome*, and her charge of *schism* on the Protestant Reformation, are built upon groundless suppositions, false assertions, and fallacious interpretations of scripture, in order to prove, what indeed no argument can prove, that the *Roman* church has not erred ; that in virtue of the promises both of the Old and New Testament, she was to continue pure and holy in her doctrine and terms of communion in all ages, even to the end of the world, and consequently could never stand in need of a Protestant Reformation. For we see the *Roman* church has erred, we see she continues to err, we see she remains obstinate and uncharitable in her errors ; and even her vain pretence, to be always unerring, cuts off all hope of her reformation.

Now any proof which concludes against plain notorious fact, must be fallacious *somewhere*, though we should not be able to shew precisely *where* the fallacy lay : for we are sure of this, that no arguments  
whatever

whatever can prove what is impossible to be true, as that a fact should be, and yet not be at the same time.

However, the church of *Rome* insists upon it, \* “ That our Lord Jesus Christ, who cannot tell us a lie, has promised that his church should *be built upon a rock*; that *the gates of hell*, that is, the powers of darkness, should never *prevail against it*: † That Christ, who is the *way, the truth, and the life*, has promised to the pastors and teachers of his church, *to be with them always, even to the end of the world*: ‡ That Christ has promised to the same teachers to give them *the spirit of truth*, that he may *abide with them for ever*; || and that he *shall guide them into all truth*: †† And, in fine, that the church is called by St. *Paul, the pillar and ground of truth*; \*\* therefore she cannot uphold pernicious errors.” From these, and some other passages of scripture of like sound, Papists infer, “ It is manifest that the church of Christ (meaning their own communion) is infallible in all matters relating to faith, so that she can neither add, nor retrench from what Christ taught.” It

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\* Grounds of Catholick Doctrine, ib.

† Matt. xvi. 18.

‡ Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

|| John xiv. 16, 17.

†† John xvi. 13.

\*\* 1 Tim. iii. 15.

is further asserted, with a confidence truly amazing; “ the Protestant religion cannot  
 “ be true, except the whole scripture both  
 “ of the Old and New Testament, from  
 “ the beginning to the end, be false, which  
 “ in so many places assures us, that the  
 “ church of Christ should never go astray---  
 “ and it is evident there could be no room  
 “ for a Reformation of the church of  
 “ Christ, except the church was gone  
 “ astray.” \*

These several passages of scripture have been often considered at large, and their true meaning vindicated from the fallacious interpretations of the Popish Doctors: my time will only allow some general remarks upon them, which will, however, sufficiently shew, how much they are *mistaken* and really *misinterpreted* by a pretended *infallible* interpreter of scripture. For in the

1st. Place, it is far from manifest, that these scriptures, whatever their true meaning may be, give any particular promise or privilege to that part of the church, which communicates with the Pope or bishop of *Rome*. They may full as well mean, those faithful Christians who in all ages withstood the errors and corruptions of Popery; for these faithful witnesses were  
 a part

\* Roman Catholick's Reasons why he cannot conform to the Protestant Religion, p. 2.



a *part* of the church of Christ, a *much better part* of it than the *Roman* communion: They were more likely to have their faith and patience supported with encouragements of divine assistance in times of dangerous apostacy, and violent opposition to the cause of truth and Christian liberty. It is certain the Papists themselves will not have these scriptures to mean every part of the Christian church, or indeed any part of it, which is not in communion with them: the scriptures no where shew they intend these privileges, whatever they may be, for the *Roman* communion, more than for the *Greek*. The scriptures no where intimate the bishop of *Rome* has a greater interest in these promises than the bishops of *Constantinople*, *Alexandria*, *Antioch*, or *Jerusalem*. Indeed the church of *Rome* has shewn manifestly by her corruptions, she has as little pretence to such privileges, as any known part of the Christian church throughout the whole world.

2dly, We further observe, it is far from manifest, that these scriptures promise *unerring perfection* to *any part* of the church at all. What promise is contained in these scriptures, that any church shall be infallible in all matters relating to faith, so that it can neither add, nor retrench from what Christ has taught? It is so far from being

manifest, that this is the true meaning of these scriptures, that plain, constant, and evident experience manifestly shews, it is not, and cannot be the true meaning of them. Indeed the full meaning of them is answered in these two things :

1. In such revelation of God's will, by the Spirit of truth, as shall always direct the church into the knowledge of all truth necessary to salvation ; this is always done by the holy scriptures, the oracles of truth, in which every Christian has the spirit of truth which inspired the apostles, guiding them into all truth of the Christian revelation ; except however the *Roman* church, which seems resolved these promises shall not, in this sense at least, belong to her, by denying the use of the scriptures to those who are in her communion.

2. The fullest meaning of these scriptures is answered, by a continual protection of God's providence and gracious assistance of his holy Spirit, which shall preserve his church in this world, so that the profession of the Christian faith shall be maintain'd in every age ; that notwithstanding all opposition of error or wickedness, some shall be found faithful, some shall hold and profess the chief and essential truths of the Christian faith, which shall be sufficient to  
shew

shew the true way of salvation, as made known in the Christian revelation. But does this promise any ways teach us, that they who hold all necessary truth cannot possibly fall into any error? Does this prove, for instance, that the church of *Rome* cannot possibly add some of her own *inventions* to the doctrines of God's *revelation*? that she can never teach for doctrines the commandments of *men*, as well as the commandments of *God*? or even when she holds the *truth*, that she may not hold it in *unrighteousness*? or, in a word, do these scriptures prove, that the church of *Rome* cannot possibly do what most certainly she has done?

Thus all these scriptures are a groundless and a false foundation for the Popish claim of unerring perfection; for they promise no particular privilege to the *Roman* church above other churches, nor do they promise unerring perfection to any church at all. Still the Popish doctors have further pleas in reserve, to make these scriptures mean what they would have them, whatever their true meaning may be, by contending, \* “ We are to take the meaning and interpretation of scripture from the same hand from which we received the book itself, that is, from the church, and not assume a liberty to interpret scripture

\* Grounds of Catholick Doctrine, C. 2. §. 1.



“ scripture according to our own private judgment.”

I shall not attempt to shew how groundless and false this pretence is ; this has been already fully proved to you. I shall only observe one thing, in answer to their harangue, against the liberty Protestants take to interpret the scriptures according to their own *private* judgment.

Protestants modestly own the *fallibility* of their *own* judgment ; but they justly lay claim to *sufficient certainty* in the *true sense* and *meaning* of the holy scriptures in all things *necessary*. Protestants, though they own they are fallible in many things, and should therefore shew a modesty in their opinions becoming such an acknowledgment ; yet they justly assert, there are many things, in which they are *sufficiently certain*, that they are *not mistaken*. They are sufficiently certain that the *Roman* church has erred, that she is no infallible judge of controversies, when she has pronounced so many errors to be doctrines of faith. This is not a pretence to *infallibility*. This is not to oppose the *authority* of private judgment to the publick *authority* of the church. It is only to oppose the *certainty of divine revelation*, to the *known corrupt practices* of the *Roman* communion, in things wherein the practice of the church of *Rome* plainly and evidently opposes

opposes the laws and orders of the Christian revelation ; this is only to oppose the *commandments of God* to the *doctrines of men*, and the *real authority* of Christ the one Lord, to the *usurped authority* of his pretended vicar : and every one must have authority from God himself to do what God himself requires of him as his duty, *to prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good.\**

After all that can be said on this argument, it will remain a sure and evident truth, that every man's *own judgment*, upon an honest and careful inquiry how he is to walk and please God, is *his conscience* ; in following which he will always walk before God with an upright heart, and serve him with godly sincerity ; and so far must do that which is good and right in the sight of God : but for a man to act contrary to *his conscience*, is not to serve God with an upright heart ; it is to walk before him in falshood and hypocrisy, and therefore to do that which certainly is evil in his sight ; for *lying lips are always an abomination unto the Lord*.

It is therefore highly unreasonable and extravagant to demand, as the *Roman church* does, that Protestants ought to *rectify* their consciences and *submit* them to the *authority* of their church ; and rather believe the church of *Rome* cannot err, because *she* says so ;

\* 1 Theff. v. 21.



so; than that she has erred, tho' *they* see her errors with their own eyes. This is not to *rectify* conscience, but to *destroy* it. It requires men to act against all rules of reason, honesty and religion, to sacrifice sincerity and good conscience, to injustice and oppressive power. In such cases, to use the words of a great man, "Consent would be conspiracy, and open contestation is not faction or schism, but due Christian animosity."\*

Yet still the *Roman* church insists, "that the *true church* of Christ can be no other than the *catholick*, which alone has had a *visible being* in the world, ever since Christ's time; not the Protestant or any other modern sect, which only came into the world since 1500; for those that came into the world 1500 years after Christ, came into the world 1500 years too late to be the religion or church of Christ."†

Hence they would infer, that Protestants by separating from the church of *Rome*, separated from the true church of Christ, and therefore must be guilty of schism. They ask with an air of triumph, "Where was the Protestant religion before *Luther* and *Calvin*?" and too often impose upon the weak and the injudicious by their confident assertion, that the Protestant religion had no being till fifteen hundred years after Christ.

But

\* *Hales's Tracts*, 194.

† *Grounds of catholick doctrine*, c. 1.



But I hope one plain and easy observation will abate this confidence, and be sufficient to shew the weakness and falshood of this assertion. We are to consider two things in the Protestant reformation, which are very different from each other; the one, the *doctrines* which the Protestant reformation restored to their original purity; the other, the *free profession* of these doctrines, and *open separation* from the communion of the church of *Rome*, on account of them.

1. If we consider the *doctrines* the Protestant reformation restored to their original purity, they are the very doctrines taught by Christ and his apostles. These doctrines ever were in the Bible, where the Popish corruptions of them never were. These doctrines are so far from coming first into the world 1500 years after Christ, that they justly claim the highest and most venerable antiquity, and the Protestant doctrine in the most essential points is only returning to the pure faith and worship of the apostolical church.

2. If we consider the Protestant reformation as a *free profession* of these doctrines, and an *open separation* from the communion of the church of *Rome*, on account of them: we must indeed confess, that the church of *Rome* had long prevailed to hinder a free profession of the truth against her

errors and corruptions, by all the cruel and oppressive methods of persecution. The righteous and wise providence of God, tho' in many things to us unsearchable, permitted her to *make war with the saints and to overcome them*.\* There were indeed many persons in *every age*, and in *most parts* of *Europe*, who all along *protested* against the usurped power, the principal errors and corruptions of the *Roman church*; but they were as *witnesses prophesying in sackcloth*; † they were persecuted and killed, wherever the power of the *Roman church* could reach them. Of this we have clear evidence, in the known histories of *Claude of Turin*, *Berenger*, and their disciples; of the *Albigenses* and *Waldenses*; of *Wickleff*, *John Hus*, *Jerome of Prague*, their followers and others; so that all along, to the time of the reformation, there has been a *cloud of witnesses protesting* against the corruptions of Popery, and even sealing their testimony with their blood. It was not indeed till about the year 1500, that God was pleased to raise up men of faithfulness and zeal, and in such sufficient numbers, that they were able to *protect themselves* in a free and open profession of truth against the oppressive power of the *Roman church*. So that the whole of this boast, [Where was the Protestant religion before *Luther*?] amounts to

\* Rev. xiii. 7.

† Rev. xi. 3.

no more than this ; God permitted the church of *Rome* long to oppose and persecute truths *as antient as the Bible*, as the faith and practice of the apostles ; till at length the good providence of God blessed many churches with *free liberty to profess with safety* the truths and practice of the most antient Christian church. As then we ought to be sensible, how much we are indebted to the goodness of God, that the Protestant reformation began *so soon as it did* ; we ought also to charge it as the great and grievous sin of the *Roman* church, that it began *no sooner*.

Hence finally we may observe, with what groundless confidence Papists assert, *their communion is the safer*, in the judgment of Protestants themselves ; because “ Protestants, they say, own the *Roman* church “ wants nothing necessary to salvation ; “ whereas the *Roman* church with unanimous consent believes and professes, that “ Protestancy unrepented of destroys salvation.”\* For it is manifest, that Protestants allow no such thing, as that the communion of Papists is a safer way to salvation, than the communion of the Reformed churches. Protestants maintain, and prove, that the *Roman* communion holds many very dangerous errors and corruptions, together with the fundamental articles of the

\* Knot in Chillingworth, c. 7. §. 6.



Christian faith ; that these errors and corruptions are of so dangerous nature and consequence, as greatly to *hazard salvation*. In particular, we have seen the church of *Rome* is in very great danger of being cut off from the communion of the true church of Christ, by her schismatical principles : so far are we from allowing there is greater *safety* in the church of *Rome*, that we evidently prove there is *incomparably more danger* and *hazard of being saved* in the *Roman* communion, than in the communion of the Reformed Churches.

We have now seen one instance more of the errors and corruptions of Popery, and therein a further instance of our happiness in the Protestant Reformation. Let us consider what remains our care and duty to *improve* it. With what thankfulness and gratitude are we to own the goodness of God, which has bestowed so great a blessing upon us ; which has continued it to us by so many kind and wonderful providences ; and which, we hope, designs to perpetuate this blessing to us by the happy provision of a *Protestant* succession to our *British* crown : let us shew our thankfulness for this goodness of God, by a hearty and affectionate zeal for the security of *that government*, which, under God, is the *only visible* security of our happiness as a Protestant nation.

Let us not terrify our selves with any groundless fears of danger in our separation from the *Roman* communion, in which there is so plain and evident danger of separating ourselves from Christ Jesus the head of the church, and of incurring the guilt of damnable sin; as we cannot profess and practise her errors and corruptions without falshood and hypocrisy, which are damnable sins.

But let us at the same time be watchful against the danger of schismatical principles, and a schismatical temper in ourselves. We may fully prove the church of *Rome* to be schismatical, and yet be unable to vindicate ourselves, and our own conduct from the same charge. It is more than possible there may be angry passions, uncharitable tempers, and unchristian animosities on both sides of a question. When these shall be truly chargeable on both sides, neither side can be excused from the imputation of schismatical principles more or less. Let us be careful to wipe off from ourselves, as Protestants, this imputation, that we cannot avoid one "note of schism at least, by reason of our own mutual quarrels and contentions."\* We are to contend earnestly for the faith, and stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free: that is our duty as Christians: nor can we have

\* Knot in Chillingworth, c. 5. §. 38.

have a cause more just and glorious in itself, or of more important concern to our own interests, than the cause of religious truth and liberty: but we are also to *keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace*, which is our duty as much as the other. Let us religiously avoid all groundless jealousy, all uncharitable interpretation, and all unchristian censure of each other's actions: let us defend the truth with modesty, temper, and charity; and neither the cause of truth, nor the honour of the Protestant Reformation, will suffer by the management. But if we contend even for the truth, with pride, passion, and uncharitableness, we shall disserve the truth, and dishonour ourselves: this will make it appear to the observing and the wise, that we have learned a skill of being in the wrong, at the same time we have a right cause to defend; and that we have found out an art, when we are disputing for religion, to lose our own religion in the dispute. Shall a spirit of ambition and worldly interest firmly unite our enemies against us, and shall not the honour of God, and the spirit of Christianity, as firmly unite us in the cause of truth and religion, against so great and dangerous corruptions of both? To conclude,

Let us principally aim, by the grace of God, to improve the invaluable blessing of the Reformation, by a more constant and  
powerful



powerful influence of the excellent principles of the true Christian faith and practice on our hearts and lives, that we may grow in *every grace* of a true Christian, as well as in the *true knowledge* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; that we may be better prepared for a more perfect state of the church, than we can hope to enjoy in this world; and that we may at the last attain the full communion of the glorious church above, in its heavenly state of perfection and happiness.

Let this doctrine then excite in us a more serious care to preserve the hopes and privileges of the true church of God to ourselves, to prevent the *sleights of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive*, \* from prevailing over us: let the danger of being cut off from the privileges and blessings of the church of God, in separating ourselves from Christ the head, by departing from the faith and obedience of his gospel, make us tremble at the thoughts of Popery; which imposes the profession and practice of such errors and corruptions as must greatly expose us to the guilt of hypocrisy and damnable sin, to the danger of being cut off from the internal communion of the Catholick church: let it be our constant care to know the mind of Christ better, from his own word

\* Ephes. iv. 14.

word of revelation: let us receive all his doctrines, directions, rules, and orders, with religious reverence and affection: let us consider them, on the one hand, as the laws of Christ's spiritual kingdom, and on the other hand, as the means of his grace, to bring us to his glory: let every thing have the authority and obligation of religion with us, which Christ has made a part of his religion: then will our religion be a fair image of God's perfection, a conformity to the doctrine and the life of Christ in all goodness, righteousness, and true holiness; then we shall *continue in the goodness of God*, and finally attain that *eternal glory unto which he has called us by Christ Jesus, to whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.*

## F I N I S.

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*Next Week will be publish'd,*

THE second Edition of a Dissertation on 2 *Thes.* ii. 1, 12. In which 'tis shewn that the Bishop of *Rome* is the Man of Sin, that the whole Prophecy in that Chapter is applicable to him, and his Adherents, and to them alone; nor can we at this Day describe the Apostasy of the Church of *Rome* in a more concise and lively Manner than the Apostle has done in that short and remarkable Prophecy. By the Author of the Paraphrase and Notes on St. *Paul's* Epistles to *Philemon*, First and Second to the *Thessalonians*, First and Second to *Timothy* and *Titus*; in Imitation of Mr. *Locke's* manner, which completes St. *Paul's* Epistles.

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